

TEN MINUTES CAUTION 10

FROM A

PLAIN MAN 10

TO HIS

FELLOW-CITIZENS.

TEN MINUTES REFLECTION

ON THE

LATE EVENTS



F R A N C E.

WOODBIDGE:

PRINTED BY R. LODER.

M. DCC. XCIII.

TEN MINUTES CAUTION

FROM A

PLAIN MAN TO HIS FELLOW-CITIZENS.

IT is in general of very little importance to the reader to know who, or what sort of person, the writer of any thing is. But to you, Fellow Citizens, I think it is material to consider who the men are whose writings on public matters are recommended to your perusal. In this view you will permit me to tell you something of myself. First, then, I will tell you who I am not. I am not a Foreigner, who would gratify resentment as well as pride by throwing this country into confusion. I am not a desperate Incendiary, whose circumstances cannot be made worse by any change, who will take the chance of setting the house on fire that he may pilfer the furniture while it is burning. I am not a furious Enthusiast in Religion or Politics, who, under pretence of Toleration in the one, or Liberty in the other, would overturn the established Church or the established Constitution. I am none of those, my brethren. I am a plain man, a tradesman, who, having acquired a competency by his honest industry, is now winding up his business in order to enjoy that competency in ease and quiet, in his old age, in the midst of a virtuous family of his own rearing. I know nothing of great Men or Ministers, and concern myself no farther about them than as I think their measures are for the interest of my country. I care not who sits at the Helm, provided the Vessel be well steered.—But though I am perfectly independent as to my own circumstances, yet I am dependent as far as this goes, that the happiness, or the prospect of the happiness, of my Fellow

low

low Citizens makes me happy : their unhappiness, or the fear of their unhappiness, makes me unhappy.

In this character, and with these feelings, I am tempted to use my pen, for the first time in public, to caution my countrymen against the mischief which some men would wish to do among you ; to beg of you not to endanger the peace and prosperity of yourselves and your Country to gratify their Malice, their Ambition, or their Hopes of Gain.

Consider, my Friends, at what time, and in what circumstances, those men would persuade us to make a change in our situation. Would any of us think it prudent, in the way of trade, if our business were good, our shop well frequented, our customers increasing, in short, every thing about us in a thriving condition, all at once to alter our *Firm*, to change our Agents abroad, to dismiss our Clerks and Servants at home, and to tell our customers that we were to deal with them quite in a different way for the future ? Would any of us do this ?—Or would not our relations take out a commission of lunacy against us if we did ?—Just as madly, my Friends, it appears to me, should we act, if, in the present situation of our public affairs, we should think of altering that Constitution under which, by the blessing of God, we have attained, and enjoy, our present National Security and Prosperity.

I should be glad to know what advantage we are to get by the Levelling of Ranks, which those writers would persuade us to wish for, by regaining what they call the *Rights of Man*. If they have a mind to go back to the woods again, and live as they say men lived in this country two thousand years ago, let them, in God's name ; but I, who am sitting in a good snug parlour with all my family comforts around me, will rather chose to keep as I am. If there is to be any society at all, I presume
some

some must necessarily be richer and more powerful than others : but if those who have little are secure of it, I say, as I said before, they may be as happy as those who have the most. As things are at present, I find great advantages in the riches and grandeur of some of my countrymen. I have a set of wealthy customers who put a great deal of money into my pocket in the year, whose expences suitable to their rank and situation in life, enable me to enjoy all the solid comforts suitable to mine.

I received, some time ago, a letter from an old friend and correspondent at *Manchester*, full of hard words, and in a high flown style, complaining of the extravagance and luxury of Dukes and Lords, who were no better flesh and blood than he or I, and asking me to put down my name to a set of Resolutions for correcting that abuse. I thought at first my old friend had been playing upon me, as it was about the *fooling* time of the year ; but when I was told that there was seriously such Resolutions proposed at *Manchester*, I wrote a serious answer. I desired him to recollect how much of my money had gone through his hands since our first dealings with one another, and that I believed in my conscience there was scarce a single *Necessary* in all our accounts ; so that if *Luxury* was to be put down, he must shut up shop. I believe my good friend was ashamed of himself, for he answered my next order, and said nothing more of the Resolutions.

The modern Levellers tell us what we are to gain by their plan ; but, my Friends, it is necessary for us to think what we should lose by it. Every man in a decent situation in life, even if he earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, has something he can call his own, something he feels comfortable in, and which his way of life has made more suitable to him than the fine things of other people in a higher sphere, which is generally a situation of more care than comfort.

Every man who has something to preserve for himself, and too honest to encroach on his neighbours, will tremble at the effects of throwing loose every bond of peace and good order. My *Manchester* friends some time ago had a taste of the consequences in the burning of their cotton mills.— This is a strong instance of what are the principles lately attempted to be introduced among us. The truth is, I believe, that if this new system was to take place, the effect would be, that the next day all the rich would be ruined, above half the industrious would be soon put out of employ, and in a little time all the poor would be starved.

We hear a great deal about the *Americans* and the *French*, and the excellent Governments they have established; and one of the great Apostles of the new Doctrines tells us how much we should profit by adopting the like Governments. In the first place, I am strongly inclined to suspect the friendship of this gentleman's advice. He tells us himself, that he began by doing this country all the harm in his power in favour of America; that he formed the scheme, during the war with that country, of coming to England for the purpose of broaching his principles; and seems to have thought, that if people were mad enough to listen to him, we should soon have been in such a situation, that neither America nor any other Country would have had any thing to fear from us.—I am told he has since resided principally in France, where he has probably found new reasons for making this attempt; and yet this Imposter now gravely tells you, that this is done from his great regard for your welfare: as far as himself is concerned he risks little, as, by all accounts, he has neither property nor reputation to lose.

This gentleman tells us we have no constitution,
and

and that what we have is wretchedly bad, and that therefore we should overturn it, and get the American or the French Constitution as fast as we can. —I do not imagine any of my countrymen know what these American or French Constitutions are; and I confess, I hardly think it worth their enquiry, while they are happy under our own. I believe, however, the fact is, that the Americans, after they left us, were under great difficulty how to go on at all. Luckily for them, Mr. Paine was not at hand to preach confusion; they had still some notion left of the British Constitution under which they had so long lived, and they had sense enough to conform to it as nearly as they could. As to France, their old Government was bad enough; what it is now, it is difficult to say: I am told that, in fact, they have no Government at all; and what it will end in, he must be very wise or very bold that will guess.

Mr. Paine tells us we are oppressed and ruined by taxes; and he proposes, if we will let him make a new Constitution for us, to save us a world of expence, by turning adrift all the present servants of Government, and having only a certain number of officers by whom all the business of the Nation is to be done. Our taxes (one half of which were laid on to pay the debt of the American war, in which Mr. Paine was so active against us), to be sure, are heavy, and I am glad to find that our present managers have begun to take off some of them; but I don't find we have been ruined even by these taxes; on the contrary, we have been thriving apace under the present Government. But what is the reason we pay these expences? Because the business of a nation, like that of an individual, cannot be done without paying the servants it necessarily employs. —Mr. Paine indeed has made this wonderful discovery, that if you have fewer servants at less wages,
it

it would cost you less. This may be very true; but if a farmer were to part with his labourers, or a manufacturer with his workmen, under pretence of diminishing his expences, and it appeared that he did this without considering the extent and manner of cultivating the farm, or the nature and profit of the manufacture, do you think that either would be foolish enough to take his advice? If they did, the consequence would be, that at the end of the year the farmer would be turned out of his bargain for not paying his rent, and the manufacturer would become a bankrupt.

My friends, I am no philosopher, nor fine writer, though I got a tolerable education at the Charter-House, and remember a little of my *Grammar* as well as Mr. Paine. But without philosophy or fine writing, I may venture to beseech you, not to throw away all the blessings you possess on a wild experiment to find something better, and that too on the authority of people who have an interest in misleading you. For my own part, I am come to an age that cannot look for living long to enjoy our present national prosperity; but I have children and grand-children; and I cannot bear to think, that folly or wickedness should endanger the happiness which I hope they will inherit, by having the good fortune to be born under the *British Constitution*.

TEN MINUTES REFLECTION

ON THE

LATE EVENTS IN FRANCE.

SOME time ago I used the freedom to address to you a very short plain Paper, under the title of "Ten Minutes' Caution," against some Doctrines which Mr. Thomas Paine and others were at great pains

pains to inculcate. To any man who had leisure to think on the subject, and was disposed to think impartially, I believe that Caution was not very necessary. The present Paper stands perhaps more in need of an Apology; it were indeed scarcely possible to imagine, that any rational person who had heard of the late Events in France could be insensible to the feelings they must raise in every honest heart, or the reflections they must cause in every sound mind, did we not still see examples of individuals and Societies wicked or mad enough to countenance those proceedings, and to hold out to their Countrymen the same sort of Doctrines by which all this mischief in our neighbouring Country has been occasioned. I believe those Persons and Societies to be as despicable in themselves, as their doctrines are pernicious; yet I hope, my Friends and Fellow-Citizens, you will forgive my anxiety, if while they are trying to mislead you by Falsehoods and Misrepresentations, I wish to mention to you a few Reflections, which must, I think, strike every man of common sense and common honesty, on the present situation of that unhappy Country.

I believe those Advocates for the French Revolutions (for, as might have been expected, they have not been contented with one) will hardly venture to shock British humanity by vindicating the Barbarities of the Mob of Paris, though some of the Newspapers, known by the name of Opposition Papers, have published what they call Apologies and Palliations of them. It will be difficult, I think, even at the Old Bailey, to find Readers who can excuse murdering hundreds in cold blood, carrying their heads on Pikes, mangling their bodies, and acting such horrible and beastly cruelties as none but Cannibals were ever supposed to practice. These are not the Writings, therefore, which any who
knows

knows the People of Great Britain will think it necessary to answer. But there are some men more artful in their attempts to mislead you ; who blame those Barbarities, but vindicate the Doctrines and Principles by which they have been caused. It is of such Principles, that a very little reflection on what has passed during the last three years in France will, I think, sufficiently teach us to beware.

I am no Philosopher, my Friends ; but it seems plain enough to any man of common understanding, that in any country that has been civilized or governed at all, setting up the new and chimerical system of the Rights of Men as the rule of public conduct, is bidding farewell to any thing like Government or Law, Order, Peace, or Security. In any Society, except Government has power, no man can be free ; because freedom in my neighbour to do me wrong, may be Liberty to him, but it is Tyranny to me. Such has been the state of France for some time past : yet they have told us France was free all the time, because the Tyrants that imprisoned, robbed, and murdered the people, were not Kings, or Nobility, but were, on the contrary, what they call Sans Culottes, which may be translated the Tatterdemallians of Paris, the very scum of the earth.

In every Society, except in the very woods of the Savages, Property and Rank must be unequal, though the happiness they afford are more equal, I believe, than we are sometimes apt to imagine.— The security of that happiness is the great point ; if that is taken away, the value of the greatest and the least is equally destroyed. The only persons who can then have enjoyment in any thing, will be those few desperate and abandoned men, who are too idle to have got any property of their own, and too worthless to have any consideration for their Neighbours or Fellow-Creatures.

B

When

When people talk of Equality, which is a word much in vogue of late, I am afraid they generally think only of being equal to those who are now above them, not of those who are now below them becoming equal to themselves. Depend upon it, the desire of Levelling will be at least as strong in the lower rank as in any of those above it. If Tradesmen think it fair that they should be equal to Lords, (God knows they are generally much happier) their Workmen will themselves be equally entitled to be on a par with them! and the honest workman who now brings up his family decently and comfortably on the profits of his labour, does not perhaps reflect, that on this new plan of Equality, the sturdy ruffian who now begs a halfpenny from him at the corner of the street, may chuse to eat the dinner he has provided for his wife and children, or to knock him down with his crutch, if he refuses his consent to that proposal. The only man who can gain on this Plan, is he who has nothing to lose; and they will probably get uppermost, who risk nothing if they should fall. Such has been the case in France. The Sans Culottes, the naked Blackguards, have been in truth the Rulers of that miserable Country. You know that in defiance of the pretended Government of the National Assembly, these worthy gentlemen took upon them the disposal of the Lives and Properties of their Fellow-Citizens, and after having amused themselves (shocking as the word is, I use it seriously) with murder one day, went about the next, stopping every decent person in the streets, and took from them whatever part of their property or apparel they thought worth taking. The National Assembly wrote high flown Decrees against this in vain; they would scarcely indeed wonder at what was a natural consequence of the Rule of Equality and the Rights of Men, for
which

which their Philosophers had written as high flown Decrees before.

But, say our Reforming Writers and Societies, we do not mean in any degree to give birth to such anarchy and disorder: We mean only to make Government what it ought to be—an Instrument for the Good of the People. So said the first Reformers of France, and many of them, I believe, said it sincerely, which is more than my knowledge of some of our Reformers will allow me to believe of them. But have things in France turned out as those best of the Revolutionists expected? Would they not have shuddered to think, that such Assassinations and Massacres as have deluged Paris, and some other Towns in France with blood, could possibly happen in any land where common Reason or Humanity existed? Such, however, have been the effects of letting loose, under the idea of Reformation, a spirit of Revolution, and of contempt for Order and Good Government. Suffer People once to shake off established Government, and fanciful men to propose visionary theories in its stead, and the greatest injustice and misrule will infallibly ensue.

It is, I fancy, not an easy matter, even for the wisest and the most virtuous men to make a Government for a Nation. The old established Government, which is called the Constitution, comes on by degrees, as necessity requires, and as the situation of the people admits. But if the greatest Philosopher, or a set of the greatest Philosophers, sit down in their studies, without that necessity, to invent or to mend a Constitution, it is a thousand to one they make a bungling piece of work of it. I am a Plain man, and therefore may be excused a homely Simile: If any of us wished to have a Coat made, I think we should hardly say to our Neighbour

bour the Taylor, who had served us well for many a year, "You are a Bungler at your Trade, and I will not employ you any longer; you follow the old vulgar practice of taking measure, which I am now too wise to submit to; I am to send for the Professor of Anatomy, who knows how a man is made by Nature, and he shall cut my coat for me of that perfect pattern which becomes it." I really think the French Philosophers have acted just as ridiculously: in the best of them this was only Folly and Vanity; in the worst of them it was Knavery and Wickedness.

I have lived to such an age, my Friends, as to have had time to look about me with some observation, from which we can always judge, if we will not allow ourselves to be carried away by fine words.—Tell me, upon recollection, have you often known any of those violent Reformers good for any thing as a Merchant, a Tradesman, or a Manufacturer? Was his business thriving, his family happy, his servants or workmen well used and comfortable? Or was he not, generally, an idle, dissipated, vapouring fellow, harsh to his wife, neglectful of his family, a bad paymaster, and an unsafe dealer? The great leaders of the French Mob were, I understand, just such men as these—men of fine tongues, but black hearts, whose persons nobody regarded, and whose characters every body who knew them despised; men, in short, who never could be any thing during the peace and prosperity of a country, but who were likely to be leading men when people were to be led to villanies and crimes. The more you know of their friends and associates in Britain, the more, I believe, you will discover that they are of a piece with those in France, in their Characters as well as in their doctrines.

Mr. Paine and most of his disciples, having no
property

property of their own to take care of, are the more disinterested, no doubt, in their great care of yours: it is your money they wish to save by a reform, which, they tell you, will greatly lessen the public expences, which under the present establishment, press so hard on the bulk of the people. I might make a short answer to this, by desiring them to tell us, if in any of those countries where the expences of Government are much smaller, there is the same comfort, the same good living, among the bulk of the people as in England? The truth seems to me to be, that in every rich and thriving country, the expences of Government must be greater than in a poor one, because offices will not be executed well and honourably, nor will those who hold them, have the respect that is necessary for executing them well, unless the salaries bear a proportion to the fortunes of the people around them. The French have become great œconomists in that way, and have cut down, in their short-hand manner, the salaries of different offices to a very small proportion of what they were. But what sort of people have they got to fill those offices, or how have they been executed? And even in the saving, I am told they have been sadly disappointed: according to our good old proverb, they have been penny-wise and pound-foolish; it has cost them more to repair the ill-done work of their new officers, than the highest allowance which English liberality would have made for the appointments.

I have heard some of my discontented neighbours talk of the hardship there was, that such and such a great man had so much a year from the public, while the poor were so burthened as they are. Now I very much doubt, whether in fact the poor contribute any thing to the payment of those great men's salaries. I have had a good deal of experience

ence in that line, and I believe the workman is always paid for his work according to the rate which his living costs; and the taxes and burthens that his employers pay, are laid on the price of what they sell, over and above his wages. If there is a brisk sale for what he works on, he may get higher wages; if a dull sale, he will get lower, or he may want work altogether. The rich men that live round us make the sale brisk, and if they have their luxuries, we have our profits from them. But as I take it, the Rights of Men the Liberty and Equality we hear so much about, would soon set the workmen idle altogether. So I understand it has done in Paris; there indeed some of them have found other trades, they have become butchers of defenceless prisoners, grey-haired old men, and helpless women and children. In Britain, thanks be to God, we have more worthy employments; and there never was a time when industry was better rewarded, when Trade was brisker, Manufactures more flourishing, or the Country more thriving than at present. I trust it will continue so, notwithstanding all the pains our Reformers and Revolutionists take to make it otherwise. Some of them, we know, have an interest against the prosperity of this country, and are therefore excusable in point of prudence, if they set humanity and goodness (as they can easily do) out of the question. But what apology could we find for ourselves, if we should be seduced by those tempters to commit a sort of self-murder on our country? Even Satan himself did not tempt Job to suicide, till he was poor, and miserable, and sick, and naked.—These modern Satans have the impudence to tempt us to the same sort of crime, when, like Job in his first state, our substance is great and increasing, when our sheep, our cattle, and our stores abound.

You will observe, my friends, that those French philosophers

philosophers whom our reformers so much admire, had nothing to restrain them but the risk they might run in this world. All belief of a God and another world they had thrown entirely aside. Are you willing, my friends, to part with this faith and hope, which to every good man is the great comfort of his life, which gives a higher relish to his prosperity, a stay and a resting place to which he can flee in adversity? Will you not scruple setting loose your families, your workmen, your customers, and your correspondents, from the awe of God and a good conscience, and of a future state of rewards and punishments? for the purposes of the French 10th of August men this conversion was, no doubt, well contrived; they had overthrown the law and the government; they had only to efface the remaining check, the Deity, from the minds of their followers, and they could then be set to any thing.

I will not, my Friends, do the French Nation so much injustice as to suppose, that this madness, and wickedness, and impiety, are spread over the whole, or even any considerable part of it. I cannot bring myself to think so ill of any set of human beings.—But that is just the misfortune of setting loose established Government. A few desperate, abandoned men will then start up, and impudently call themselves the People. The people, accustomed to have Government act for them and protect them, will sit still and submit to that handful of Blackguards and Ruffians, and suffer more from them in one week than from almost the worst Government in a century. Remember *Æsop's Fable of the Sheep and the Dog*. The Sheep complained that the Dog fed on the milk that should have fattened their Lambs, and that he chased them very roughly if at any time they strayed from the fold. "I never eat Milk," said the Wolf, "and as I like Freedom myself, I will
not

not restrain yours." The Dog was dismissed; and the Wolf, instead of the Milk, eat up the Lambs themselves. I think there are none of us so silly as not to apply the moral to those Wolves in Sheep's cloathing, who preach up the advantages of Revolutions, and the Expence of Establishments.

It is against such men, my Friends, that I wish you to be on your guard, and to take warning by the sufferings of our Neighbours, how you listen to their arguments. Were this country even in the situation France was in formerly, (with many faults in her Government, we will allow) you see what a dreadful change for the worse the principles of such men might bring upon us. But as we are protected in our persons, safe in our property, with our country prosperous and flourishing, and every opportunity of our prospering along with her, many of our equals, rising to the greatest wealth and influence, which are open to the lowest of us all, if they have industry or abilities to attain them; while no man, however much above us, can do us the smallest injury or injustice unpunished; can we think, without abhorrence and indignation, of any arguments that would persuade us to run the risk of exchanging all those blessings for such scenes as France has lately witnessed? I leave it to yourselves (for I am no Orator) to find out words strong enough for the Wickedness of those who use such arguments, or the Folly of those who can be misled by them.

18 JA 53

F I N I S.

Office